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Written statement* submitted by the Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The General Elections in Sudan 2015

It is undoubted that regular and fair elections is one of main features of democratic regimes and that it is the sole means for realizing systematic and peaceful transfer of power and for the citizens to practice their electoral rights as guaranteed by the Constitution and the international laws.

In accordance with the General Elections Act 2008 amended 2014, Sudan enters its second round of general elections in 2015 having conducted the first round in 2010.

Within the context of its project on the issues of electoral ,democracy and peaceful transfer of power, the Maarij foundation for peace development (MFPD) considerably focuses on the compelling need for consolidating the culture of democratic elections and enhancing the negotiation and consultation efforts for building up a permanent national constitution as the most appropriate means for power transfer. The (MFPD) conceives the constitution as being the main guarantor of the electoral process by identifying the political, electoral and legislative systems and the main components of the State such as federalism and others. Elections give a valuable mechanism to avoid the hazards of armed conflict and violence.

In this regard the (MFPD) expresses its deep appreciation for the steps taken towards enhancing democracy and peace building in Sudan as demonstrated by the national dialogue initiative presented by the Government of Sudan together with a strategic plan which aims, according to the Government, to arrive at a real democracy and realize the rule of law, with the participation of all political powers. This trend was consolidated further by amending the General Elections Act to allow for a wider participation and representation.

Moreover, the independent and impartial nature of the National Elections Commission was enhanced further when it was re-formulated with the consent of the different political powers to enable it act more efficiently towards enhancing democracy, good governance and peace in Sudan.

The (MFPD) commends as well the early preparations made by the National Elections Commission by setting a time schedule for conducting the elections in April 2015 allowing a good opportunity for the different factions to make their own arrangements for the round. The updating and publishing of the electoral record took more than two month, followed by the nomination period in the first week of last January in which most of the political parties and independent candidates have participated and subsequently entered the competition for the seats of the National Parliament and the state parliaments together with the contest for the Presidency of the Republic in which fifteen candidates are competing including one woman.

Currently, the process is entering the phase of electoral campaigns which will last up to April 11th followed by balloting stage and the counting and sorting phases. Many local, regional and international organizations are engaged in arrangements for observation roles. The reports issued by the Elections Commission informed that more than 80 regional and international organizations have submitted applications for observing the elections.

The most serious threat for the elections and for democratic transformation is posed by the armed movements in Darfur, South Kurdofan and Blue Nile.

The (MFPD), while observing and watching the general election process would like to point out that the most serious challenge to democracy and peaceful transfer of power is represented by the negative role of the armed movements in Darfur, South Kurdofan and Blue Nile through creating hostile lobbies targeting political change by violent means. The

opportunity was provided to these movements to strengthen the electoral experience through democratic means and to opt for participating in the elections, compete through peaceful means and save the country from the risks of violent conflict.

Within the above elucidated context the (MFPD) states the following:

- **First:** Calls upon your esteemed Council to support the steps taken towards realizing peaceful means for power transfer through free and fair elections and exert pressure on the armed movements to abandon violence and resort to peaceful means and acknowledge that elections is the most appropriate means to access power.
- **Second:** Call upon the Government to prepare a suitable political environment before, during and after the electoral process and to work for completing the strategies of national dialogue it had recently initiated.
- **Third:** Call upon the National Elections Commission to benefit from the experience of the previous elections, take every necessary precaution to avoid repetition of any previous shortcomings and guarantee a transparent, free and fair electoral process.
- **Fourth:** Call upon all political parties to enhance the democratic experience in Sudan and engage in the current electoral process to maintain political stability.